

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE A-1

NEW YORK TIMES
2 SEPTEMBER 1981

U.S. Tells Soviet Any Arms Pacts Must Include On-Site Verification

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Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Sept. 1 — The Reagan Administration has told the Soviet Union that any future arms-control accords will have to include on-site inspection and other direct means of verification, according to Administration officials.

This message was conveyed to the Soviet chargé d'affaires in Washington, Aleksandr A. Bessmertnykh, by Eugene V. Rostow, director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, in a meeting on Aug. 21.

Moscow has generally opposed such demands in the past on the ground that they constituted intrusion into Soviet society and a pretext for spying.

Awaiting Soviet Response

A high-ranking official said the Administration was now waiting for a reply to the proposal to begin informal meetings immediately in Washington or elsewhere on the subject of verification.

Mr. Rostow was also said to have proposed exchanges on "strategic doctrine," which would include such subjects as plans for fighting nuclear wars and first-strike abilities.

Virtually all arms control agreements are now policed by what is called "national technical means," a combination of spy satellites, with photographic and radar ability, and listening posts with electronic and other sensors.

These were deemed by intelligence experts to be sufficient to monitor agreements that simply limited numbers of weapons. The satellites can see and count missile silos, submarine construction bays and bombers at airfields. But intelligence experts do not consider these means good enough to monitor the kinds of limitations now being discussed within the Administration for coming negotiations. Talks on medium-range missiles in Europe are slated to begin by December, and those on strategic nuclear missiles and bombers are expected to begin next spring.

Gauging Characteristics Difficult

For these negotiations, and particularly the talks on strategic arms, the Administration officials are considering trying to limit what they call the "destructive power" of missiles, including lifting power, explosive power and the number of warheads.

It is more difficult to verify abilities and characteristics of weapons systems than numbers of weapons. Also, as the United States and the Soviet Union begin to deploy small and mobile systems such as the cruise missile, even counting numbers will become difficult.

To deal with this, officials said Mr. Rostow told Mr. Bessmertnykh, the embassy's arms control expert, that there would have to be three verification requirements for future agreements. These would be specific limitations designed so that they could be verified; "cooperative measures" such as on-site inspection, designation of production facilities and exchanges of information on demand; and exchange of data so the two sides could agree with confidence on exactly what was being limited.

Since Soviet-American arms control talks began in the 1950's, Moscow has resisted those demands, and negotiations often foundered because of them. But in recent years there have been signs of a softening in the Soviet position.

The Threshold Test Ban Treaty, signed in 1974 but still unratified, limited underground nuclear tests to the equivalent of 150,000 tons of TNT. In it, for the first time, Moscow and Washington agreed to exchange data on their nuclear weapons programs and to limit testing to specific places to assist verification.

In the related Treaty on Peaceful Nuclear Explosions, signed in 1976 and also still unratified, the two parties agreed not only to exchange information to enhance confidence in gauging the size of an explosion but also to allow for observers and for access to the sites of the explosions. In both treaties, there were provisions for mandatory consultations as questions of compliance arose.

Moreover, in both the first treaty limiting strategic arms, signed in 1972, and the second, signed in 1979 but unratified, the Russians provided considerable data on their forces.

Administration officials also disclosed that about six weeks ago in the long-stalled negotiations in Vienna on mutual and balanced force reductions,

the Russians indicated that they now would be willing to ask questions about American data on Soviet forces in Central Europe instead of insisting on Soviet data. But American negotiators consider this a ploy to get more American data.

No Precondition, Rostow Says

Mr. Bessmertnykh asked Mr. Rostow, according to the Administration officials, if the proposed discussions on future problems of verification were a precondition for the start of the talks on medium-range missiles in Europe and on strategic arms, and Mr. Rostow replied that they were not. The Soviet diplomat then asked if the discussion could take place in the context of the negotiations themselves rather than separately, and Mr. Rostow responded that the meetings could continue informally with him, or include experts on both sides, or be held as part of the regular negotiations.

Mr. Rostow also pointed to an article of August 16 from Tass, the Soviet press agency, by a commentator, Anatoly Krasikov, who wrote: "One should realize that as new types and modifications of weapons are coming into being, it is becoming increasingly difficult to find a common denominator for defining the equilibrium of forces, and to verify arms limitation."

Mr. Bessmertnykh was said to have quipped that Mr. Krasikov seemed to be taking "the American position."